

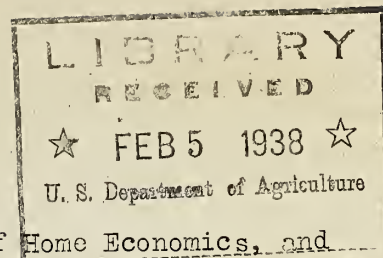
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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING



A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Office of Information, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, December 23, 1937.

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MR. SALISBURY: Here we are in Washington. And here at the other microphone across the table is Ruth Van Deman, your reporter of research in the Bureau of Home Economics. Ruth, I judge the wheels of research over your way are beginning to slow down for the holidays.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, they're slowing down decidedly. I didn't get a single whiff of roast turkey floating up the hall this morning.

MR. SALISBURY: The turkey judges take a holiday, eh?

MISS VAN DEMAN: And the cooks. They're getting a little worn down after eight straight weeks with sixteen turkeys every week.

MR. SALISBURY: Over a hundred turkeys.

MISS VAN DEMAN: 128, to be exact. And the end isn't yet.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, I hope the turkey cooks and the turkey tasters can face turkey with pleasure on Christmas.

MISS VAN DEMAN: I think they can. I'm always surprised at the way these people can experiment with food in the laboratory, and still go out afterward and enjoy a good dinner.

MR. SALISBURY: Know how to keep their science separate from their eating.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, when you're judging food you soon learn to taste, not eat.

MR. SALISBURY: So I realized that day I did a moderate bit of judging on the turkeys.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's right, Morse. You did look a little - - - what shall I say - - - satiated?

MR. SALISBURY: That's a two-bit word, Ruth. Plain stuffed is the way I felt. When the fourth sample of the sixth bird came along, white meat, dark meat, skin, gravy, and no salt on any - - -

MISS VAN DEMAN: Of course they told you the reason for no salt.

MR SALISBURY: Oh yes. They told me salt might cover up the natural flavor of the meat. I realize when you're making tests to discover the natural flavors of a whole series of foods, as in this lot of turkey on the different feed rations, you can't use any seasoning. But that doesn't make it any easier on the judges.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Morse, you're like the newspaper men who come around for a story about the taste tests. They always want to know how one gets appointed to the board of judges. I can tell they think it's a swell job. But when we explain that the judges have to go through preliminary tests to find how accurately the taste buds on their tongues register bitter, and sweet, and sour, and so on. And whether they can duplicate their own judgments on the same kind of food. And whether they're willing to sit, day after day, and judge six or eight samples of lamb, or beef, or turkey, or potatoes, or what have you, cooked without salt of course. And when we show 'em the score cards they have to use to make their judgments on. Well, it doesn't look so rosy- - -

MR SALISBURY: They think they'd rather write the story for the newspaper.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes sir. They say it's very interesting science. But they're willing for somebody else to be the guinea pig.

MR SALISBURY: Let's have a little more background on these taste tests. How did they start?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, it goes back to the old axiom - the proof of the pudding.

MR SALISBURY: Is in the eating.

MISS VAN DEMAN: In other words how a food tastes is the final test. The people who organized the big national cooperative research project on meats realized that. They were setting out to find the effect of age, and sex, and breed, and feed of the animals on the eating quality of the meat.

MR SALISBURY: In other words meat really isn't produced until it's there on the plate before you.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Exactly.

MR SALISBURY: So production research ought to and now does take account of the desires of consumers.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes. As part of the meat studies we arranged to have certain cuts from each animal cooked and judged by a board of judges - some men, some women.

MR. SALISBURY: People connected with the research project - - -

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes. But when the samples of cooked meat come to them, they don't know the history.

MR. SALISBURY: The jury isn't prejudiced.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Not if we can help it. The judges are all in one room. The meat is all cooked and carved in a separate laboratory. Each piece has a number linking it with the production record of the animal. That's all the judges are supposed to know.

MR. SALISBURY: I remember. That number is all we had on our score card for the turkey.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And sometimes the numbers are even in code. Since this meat project started we've cooked over 2000 cuts of beef. About 3500 legs of lamb. And I don't know how many pieces of fresh and cured pork. Beside all the turkeys.

MR. SALISBURY: The cooking's all standardized, I think you told me.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes. They roast every piece of beef to exactly the same stage, in the same kind of pans, at the same oven temperature. And no salt or seasoning goes on the meat.

MR SALISBURY: A regular scientific routine.

MISS VAN DEMAN: And quite different from household cooking. There you're trying to fix each piece of meat in the most appetizing way possible. Here we're keeping the cooking uniform, so the judges will be able to tell the natural qualities of the meat.

MR SALISBURY: The score card we used that day called for answers on - tenderness. Flavor - of the lean and the fat. Aroma. And a number of other things.

MISS VAN DEMAN: A lot of time has been spent studying out those score cards. They cover all the different points about the quality of a food that we generally lump together when we say it's good, or no good.

MR SALISBURY: Palatability analyzed.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Precisely.

MR SALISBURY: And then that information is handed back to the producers so they can grow better foods from the consumer standpoint.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's the real purpose, yes, of these taste tests.

MR SALISBURY: And you're doing them on other things besides meats and poultry?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Oh, yes. On potatoes, as part of the experiment to find the best storage temperature. And on potato chips fried in different kinds of fats. Some of the judges say they've never been quite the same since they ate all those potato chips.

MR. SALISBURY: Too rich for 'em?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes. All that fat, coming on an empty stomach in the middle of the afternoon.

MR SALISBURY: Didn't they have coffee or an apple or something in between?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Apples, I think, they had. Glad you reminded me of that, Morse. There always has to be something to clear the taster in between samples. Some times they use apples and plain crackers. Maybe you remember the turkey judges had black coffee to sip.

MR. SALISBURY: I do. A swallow of coffee took away the flavor of one bird so we could be fresh for the next. Ruth, there's one thing I'd like to know.

MISS VAN DEMAN: What's that?

MR SALISBURY: What happens to the rest of those roast turkeys after the judges get through.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's what everybody always asks. Well, the next day we send to about 50 more judges small portions of the cold meat to get an estimate of its flavor. Then what's left we sell to the cafeteria for sandwiches.

MR SALISBURY: And the money's turned back into the United States Treasury?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, sir. According to the regular way the Government handles such matters. Well, Morse, that's the story of the taste testers. Now here's something that's come on a Christmas card - old English and nothing whatever to do with science. Do you mind?

MR SALISBURY: Go ahead.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Let's take it verse about - like the old Christmas carollers -

So now is come our joyful'st feast;
Let every man be jolly;
Each room with ivy leaves is drest,
And every post with holly. - - - -

MR SALISBURY:

Now all our neighbors' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning;
Their ovens they with baked meat choke,
And all their spits are turning. - - - -

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Without the door let sorrow lie;
And if for cold it hap to die,
We'll bury't in a Christmas pie,
And evermore be merry.

- - - - -

And Merry Christmas, everybody.